

HOLMES RIVER, FLA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT ON
PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF HOLMES RIVER, FLA.

MARCH 10, 1914.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to
be printed, with illustrations.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, March 9, 1914.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit, herewith, a letter from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, of this date, together with copy of report from Maj. Earl I. Brown, Corps of Engineers, dated December 15, 1913, with map, on preliminary examination of Holmes River, Fla., made by him in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act approved July 25, 1912.

Very respectfully,

LINDLEY M. GARRISON,
Secretary of War.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, March 9, 1914.

From: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

To: The Secretary of War.

Subject: Preliminary examination of Holmes River, Fla.

1. There is submitted herewith, for transmission to Congress, report dated December 15, 1913, with map, by Maj. Earl I. Brown, Corps of Engineers, on preliminary examination of Holmes River, Fla., authorized by the river and harbor act approved July 25, 1912.

2. The Holmes River is a tributary of Choctawhatchee River. The existing project provides for making and maintaining a navigable channel by removing sunken logs and snags from the river and overhanging trees from its banks from the mouth to the town of Vernon. Owing to the narrowness and tortuous course of the river steamers plying out of Pensacola run only to a landing 22 miles above its mouth, where their cargoes are transferred to smaller craft, which proceed to Vernon. The only improvement suggested is that of straightening the river between the landing referred to and Vernon, but the district officer reports that the cost of the work would be greater than justified by the commerce involved, and he expresses the opinion that the stream is not worthy of improvement further than maintaining the channel which now exists. In this opinion the division engineer concurs.

3. This report has been referred, as required by law, to the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and attention is invited to its report herewith, dated January 27, 1914, concurring with the district officer and the division engineer.

4. After due consideration of the above-mentioned reports, I concur with the views of the district officer, the division engineer, and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and therefore report that the improvement by the United States of Holmes River, Fla., is not deemed advisable at the present time to a greater extent than is authorized by the existing project.

DAN C. KINGMAN,
Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

[Third indorsement.]

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS.

THE BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,
January 27, 1914.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY:

1. Holmes River is a tributary of the Choctawhatchee. It has been improved under a project adopted in 1888, which provides for making a navigable channel by removing sunken logs and snags from the river and overhanging trees from the banks from its mouth to the town of Vernon, a distance of 25 miles. The project has been completed and the stream is reported in good condition for the navigation of such craft as use it. There has been expended on the river about \$25,500.

2. During the calendar year 1912 the commerce amounted to 18,648 tons of a miscellaneous character. The district officer reports that if the present project is maintained, it will suffice for the needs of such commerce as may desire to use the river. He reports, therefore, that no additional improvement is desirable, and in this view the division engineer concurs.

3. Interested parties were advised of the unfavorable report of the district officer and given an opportunity of submitting their views to the board, but no communications on the subject have been received.

4. From the information now available, it appears that the present project is sufficient to meet present and reasonably prospective

demands of commerce. The board therefore concurs with the district officer and the division engineer and reports that, in its opinion, it is not advisable at this time to undertake any additional improvement of the Holmes River, Fla.

5. In compliance with law, the board reports that there are no questions of terminal facilities, water power, or other related subjects which could be coordinated with the suggested improvement in such manner as to render the work advisable in the interests of commerce and navigation.

For the board:

W. C. LANGFITT,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Senior Member Present.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF HOLMES RIVER, FLA.

UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Montgomery, Ala., December 15, 1913.

From: The District Engineer Officer.

To: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

(Through the Division Engineer).

Subject: Preliminary examination of Holmes River, Fla.

1. Complying with the requirements of the river and harbor act approved July 25, 1912, the following report is submitted on a preliminary examination of the Holmes River, Fla.:

2. The Holmes River rises in the southern part of Alabama; the general direction of its flow is southeasterly, emptying into Choctawhatchee River. Its total length is approximately 160 miles, with an average width at and below Vernon of about 75 feet. Its drainage area is approximately 500 square miles. The stream is wide and fairly deep up to the town of Vernon, 25 miles above its mouth. It was originally obstructed by sunken logs, fallen timber, and overhanging trees, and capable of navigation only by small craft and barges, which navigated the stream to Vernon. The variation of water surface is due to freshets only and is from 0, or low water, to 6 feet at and below Vernon.

3. The existing project adopted August 11, 1888, provides for making a navigable channel by removing sunken logs and snags from the river and overhanging trees from its banks from the mouth to the town of Vernon. This project has been completed and there is now a navigable channel from the mouth to the town of Vernon. During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1913, the portion of the river embraced in the project was worked over and such obstructions as impeded free navigation were removed. The stream is now in good condition for the navigation of such craft as are needed thereon, which are thought to be entirely adequate in size and character.

4. This stream has been the subject of one other preliminary examination which was made in 1881, wherein it was stated that the river was found to have abundant depth and width for such boats as would be needed to transport the products of the adjacent country.

5. There has been appropriated, since the adoption of the project, the sum of \$25,500, approximately all of which has been expended

in cleaning the river of obstructions, so that boats drawing 3 feet may navigate from the mouth to Vernon during the entire year. Owing to the narrowness and tortuous course of the Holmes River, steamers plying out of Pensacola run only to a landing 22 miles above its mouth, where their cargoes are transferred to smaller craft which proceed thence to Vernon. The only work other than maintenance which appears advisable is that of straightening the river between this landing and Vernon, but the cost of this work would be greater than justified by the commerce involved.

6. The commerce carried during the calendar year 1912, consisted of general merchandise, cotton, naval stores, and timber, reported as 18,648 tons valued at \$851,165. Of this 68 per cent consisted of naval stores alone; 25 per cent consisted of general merchandise, 5 per cent of timber, and 2 per cent cotton. The downstream traffic was 75 per cent of the volume of commerce carried, 73 per cent of which was naval stores. The forest will, in time, become denuded of its timber, which would leave the stable traffic approximately \$200,000 per year, and as the present channel is sufficient to care for the needs of existing commerce, it is thought that, if maintained, will be sufficient to care for the needs of such commerce as may continue to exist.

7. Taking into consideration the existing conditions of the Holmes River in connection with the present and prospective commerce I do not deem the stream to be worthy of improvement further than maintaining the channel which now exists. There are no terminal facilities existing on this stream and no additional facilities are deemed necessary for the character of commerce that now prevails or may prevail in the future. There are no questions of water power, flood control, or other correlated subjects to be considered in connection with this stream.

EARL I. BROWN,
Major, Corps of Engineers.

[First indorsement.]

OFFICE OF DIVISION ENGINEER,
GULF DIVISION,
Baltimore, Md., December 22, 1913.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS:

Forwarded, concurring in the opinion of the district officer that the present channel of Holmes River appears to be sufficient to accommodate the present traffic of the stream, and that as far as can be foreseen an improvement would not increase the present traffic, which is likely to diminish rather than to increase in amount.

LANSING H. BEACH,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Division Engineer.

[For report of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, see page 2.]





